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AUTHOR Merren, John
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ABSTRACT

An examination of curriculum development procedures at multicampus community colleges was conducted through telephone interviews with administrators from the following five institutions: Miami-Dade Community College, in Florida; Northern Virginia Community College; Pima Community College, in Arizona; Tarrant County Junior College District, in Texas, and Cuyahoga Community College District, in Ohio. Each is a unified college with regional accreditation and a single catalog. With enrollments ranging between 24,000 and 51,000, all of the colleges have multicampus representation on a deliberating body to balance campus issues against broader concerns of faculty, students, the community, and state governance bodies. Each also has a professional coordinator of curriculum who presides over the process to ensure consistency, to maintain processing of complex paperwork, and to provide technical assistance to those who initiate and react to proposals for new curriculum or changes in existing courses or programs. The bulk of this report provides a detailed comparison of specific policies and mechanisms in place at the five colleges, including the following: (1) campus approval procedures; (2) district-wide review and approval; (3) state level curriculum authority; (4) the role of constituent groups; and (5) intercampus reliability and quality control. The report concludes that each of the five colleges has responded differently to the need to balance campus autonomy with district-wide concerns, to establish systematic procedures that provide timely information concerning curriculum proposals, and to include a diverse group of college stakeholders in the decision process. The survey instrument is appended. (MAB)

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CURRICULUM PROCEDURES IN METROPOLITAN MULTICAMPUS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

John Merren, Ph.D.

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John Merren, Ph.D.

Abstract

The size and complexity of multicampus community colleges require a balance between administrative convenience and collegial management. Five community colleges with enrollments from 24,000 to 51,000 have published their curriculum procedures; and, while each institution has differences, their intent is the same: Within guidelines determined by state and accreditation authorities, campuses miles apart must cooperate and collaborate as curriculum evolves.

CURRICULUM PROCEDURES IN METROPOLITAN MULTICAMPUS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Large metropolitan community colleges frequently have multiple instructional sites with individual campuses enrolling more students than ninety percent of smaller community colleges. As a result of such large size and broad scope of operation, the curricula of these colleges are diverse and dynamic. The procedures through which orderly curricular changes occur must balance a wide variety of concerns: consistency in the midst of diversity, coordination among levels of governance, and the differing perceptions and needs of constituencies.

Discussion of these issues has been minimal in community college literature. A systems analysis of community college curriculum development published in 1974 documents decisions and their linkages through both a 33 cell flow chart and a PERT chart (Valentine and Larson). While this analysis never mentions the additional complexity of multicampus relationships, it illustrates the context in which distance, differing perceptions, and campus loyalties come to bear. In 1983 Walker and Poythress described the creation in 1981 of a faculty senate at DeKalb Community College to represent diverse interests throughout the college in curriculum decision making. Prior to the creation of this senate, curriculum changes had been presented to the entire faculty for consideration. As the college grew and became an institution of four campuses, the senate was formed to provide faculty representation for curriculum discussion. The size of the faculty and distances between campuses had become too great for joint faculty meetings to consider curriculum issues. Ten years later, the body still meets for similar

purposes. Its only subjects for deliberation are academic policy and curriculum, and the latter is less frequently on the agenda since DeKalb now is part of the University of Georgia system, which dictates much of the college's curriculum (Copenhaver, 1991).

As DeKalb learned, the distinctive tradition of collegial decision making in higher education, particularly in academic matters, becomes challenged when the size and complexity of large multicampus colleges create forces which encourage bureaucratic decision making for efficiency. Further complicating the picture are the internal relationships which are inevitable in college curriculum. For example, in most degree programs dozens of courses are shared through "general education" requirements. A change in a math, English, or history course might affect faculty, students, and program content at another location thirty miles away in a department little known beyond its home campus. Because such interrelationships exist, multicampus institutions have evolved procedures to include a wide variety of constituent representation to share information, to express perceptions, and to balance forces to produce wise decisions. The procedures discussed here are based on a survey of five community colleges in different regions of the country. Each is a unified college with one regional accreditation and a single catalog. The enrollments vary from 24,000 to 51,000 headcount for the fall term of 1990. Because their inclusion would raise a different set of issues, multicollege districts were not included. These institutions usually consist of separately accredited colleges with separate catalogs.

Multicampus districts, on the other hand, are perceived by their communities as single colleges with multiple locations for convenience. Contrasting with this perception of unity, however, may be local campus loyalties of students and faculty as well as campus competition regarding curriculum. Such is especially the case when significant geographic distances of

metropolitan areas exist, such as those in the five county district of Northern Virginia Community College, with up to 70 miles between campuses and Miami-Dade Community College, which has two of its five campuses 50 miles apart. The five districts in this study have procedures to achieve a balance of forces which act on orderly curriculum decision making. All these colleges have multicampus representation on a deliberating body to balance campus issues against broader concerns of faculty, students, the community, and state governance bodies. Each also has a professional coordinator of curriculum usually a Director of Curriculum Services, who presides over the process to oversee consistency, to maintain processing of complex paperwork, and to provide technical assistance to those who initiate and react to proposals for new curriculum or changes in existing courses or programs.

The five colleges are the following:

1. Miami-Dade Community College (Miami, Florida) with five major campuses and an enrollment of approximately 51,000.

2. Northern Virginia Community College (Annandale, Virginia) with five campuses and an enrollment of approximately 35,000.

3. Pima Community College (Tucson, Arizona) with four campuses and enrollment of 28,000.

4. Tarrant County Junior College District (Ft. Worth, Texas) with three campuses and an enrollment of 27,000.

5. Cuyahoga Community College District (Cleveland, Ohio) with three campuses and an enrollment of 24,000.

In several cases these institutions also have satellite centers, and all have some classes in off-

campus locations or at governmental or industrial sites.

The executives of these colleges possess a wide variety of titles. The significance of identifying these will be clear later in a discussion of the constituency of campus and district bodies which deliberate and recommend decisions on curricular changes. Miami-Dade has a President, campus Vice-Presidents and Instructional Deans; Northern Virginia has a President with campus Provosts and no campus deans; Tarrant County has a Chancellor and campus Presidents and Deans of Instruction (with a Provost for the community campus, which is non-credit and largely located on the grounds of other campuses); Pima has a Chancellor with campus Provosts and Deans of Instruction; and Cuyahoga has a President, Vice President, campus Provosts and Deans of Instruction, and College-wide Deans of Nursing and Engineering Technology. Each district also has a single college chief academic officer, usually a Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

The most universal characteristic of curriculum development in the colleges surveyed is systematic procedures for decision making at the campus, district, and state level. These procedures provide both coordination among the campuses and consistency in program requirements and course documentation throughout the districts. All colleges currently or in the recent past have had curriculum procedure manuals or similar documents and all also reported major or minor revisions under way in these procedures. These procedural changes resulted from personnel changes, accreditation association recommendations, reexamination of policies which may result from college reorganization, or new constituencies seeking inclusion in the decision making process.

The general summary of procedures which follows is the result of telephone interviews with

the curriculum professional of the five districts described. Initial calls were placed in November, 1990, with additional questions posed for clarification upon the receipt of college written procedures, forms. catalogs, and related documents in January, 1991. The list of specific formal questions in the initial interview are in an appendix.

Two initial generalizations appear valid: (1) these curriculum professionals serve as the center point for the process, and (2), unless indicated, the approval procedures for developing new courses or modifying existing ones are simpler than those for initiating or changing entire programs of study.

Campus Approval Procedures

On campuses, decisions to approve new or revised curricula are usually made through consultation among campus faculty, division chairs, and deans. Assuming the campus supports the proposal, there may be two issues considered: (1) what alternatives exist to implement the concept, and (2) should other campuses be involved. If the issue is a new or revised course offered on only the home campus, then little slows the passage of the proposal to the next step. On the other hand, approval of new courses or revisions not exclusive to the home campus may be complicated by a variety of issues: the presence of policies which identify another campus as having leadership, articulation agreements involving transfer courses, or internal competition for enrollment. New certificate or degree programs frequently have some of the same issues as well as others; for example, Miami-Dade and Cuyahoga both report the need to seek preliminary permission to develop a new degree program from state governing bodies.

Non-credit offerings and special topics courses sometimes provide alternatives to granting proposals for new courses. In particular, this alternative is cited to grant requests from

employers for employee training. Pima has a special designation for pilot courses as well as a single all purpose course which requires only approval by the chief academic officer. Miami-Dade has several "house numbers" for experimentation: 2990 Selected Studies; 2995 Occupational Practicum; 1920 and 2920 Workshops; and 1949 and 2949 Occupational Cooperative Education. Northern Virginia and Cuyahoga have similar practices. Proposals for new programs typically have more formal and detailed procedures. Alternatives for new program development are less numerous, especially when external control is involved, usually for transfer programs. One innovative alternative to new program development cited by Miami-Dade involved a request for an A.S. degree in Automotive Service Management. Rather than develop an entirely new program for Honda Motor Company, the college gives the equivalent of a year of articulated credit to graduates of a vocational technical school (which is permitted upon satisfactory completion of 15 on-campus credits) and then provides a year of existing management courses. Cuyahoga has a similar practice with an Associate of Technical Studies degree which allows up to one year of credit for programs not offered at the college, such as those of proprietary schools or apprenticeship programs.

Issues of preliminary inter-campus communication vary from informal discussion to structured systems. Several approaches have been developed to share information among campuses before reaching an "official" district body. Miami-Dade has standing committees on multi-campus disciplines and also uses an "RSVP" through which the district curriculum office invites representation of all campuses in curriculum development. In addition, many programs at Miami-Dade have a "home campus" from which other campuses must secure permission for changing curriculum and even for offering courses. Northern Virginia relies on Provosts to

decide which other campuses to involve. Pima has district wide faculty College Subject Area Committees which offer recommendations on multicampus programs. Tarrant County has assigned subjects among division chairs of the campuses who thereby have auxiliary assignments as "Proposal Coordinators." These coordinators, chosen annually by a steering committee of administrators, arrange for meetings of concerned chairpersons and Deans of Instruction for each proposed change under their jurisdiction, whether it originates at their campus or not. Cuyahoga has "counterparts" meetings in which faculty from different campuses discuss proposals. When proposed course or programs are multicampus, the faculty of all affected campuses must sign the minutes of the counterparts meetings where proposals are discussed. Cuyahoga further identifies a "lead campus" for many programs. A lead campus dean coordinates the curriculum and assigned instructional offerings regardless of the site where a proposal for change might originate. Lead campuses are identified in broad subject areas. For example Cuyahoga's Eastern Campus is responsible for Developmental Education; Humanities, Communications, and Social and Behavioral Sciences; Health Careers and Natural Sciences; and Nursing.

Among all colleges, faculty members are the most frequently reported individuals who initiate new or revised curriculum, and changes in courses frequently have different decision making tracks than do program changes in or the development of new programs. All five colleges in the initial stages of development in a curriculum proposal require completion of forms which frequently also stipulate attached documentation. For example, Cuyahoga requires course outlines, advisory committee review, and evidence of transferability. Miami-Dade has the most elaborate system of documentation with eleven types of forms. Included are not only

different forms for types of courses or programs, but special forms to specify library and audiovisual needs. For proposed degree programs, Miami-Dade also requires a community needs assessment, the prospects for placement, articulation agreements, plans for program evaluation, personnel and equipment requirements, the impact on EEO at the college, and minutes of relevant advisory committees. The other colleges all require portions of this list. Generally the district curriculum office is available to provide technical assistance. At Pima and Cuyahoga the curriculum office is routinely represented in campus curriculum meetings.

District-wide Review and Approval

The next step in consideration of proposals is a formal district wide deliberation body. These groups consist of district and campus representatives and are usually established in college policy and procedure manuals. No two of the colleges have the same representation.

At Miami-Dade there are monthly decisions by the Academic Affairs Committee, which consists of the Dean of Instruction from each of the five campuses and one faculty representative from each campus, the Vice President of Education Chairs the committee and acts as the tie breaking vote. These faculty members are appointed for one-year terms by the College President and the Faculty Senate Consortium President. The Committee has the final authority to approve new courses, but new programs must be approved by the District Board of Trustees. Because vocational instruction for adult students is funded by state formula, occupational postsecondary programs must also be approved by a regional coordinating council, which prevents the college from duplicating content provided by other publicly funded adult schools.

Northern Virginia has a College Curriculum Committee consisting of the five Provosts, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Associate Dean for Curriculum Services, the Associate Dean for

Planning and Assessment, six faculty members chosen by the Faculty Senate, and the following campus representatives in a rotating status: one LRC Director, one Dean of Students, and one Division Chair. The recommendations of this body then pass to the Administrative Council, which includes the President, the five Provosts, and the Dean of Academic Affairs. Curriculum approved by this body passes to the Northern Virginia Community College Board, but final approval for all curricula is at the state level.

Pima has a College Curriculum Council consisting of the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (the college's chief academic officer), five Deans of Instruction, and several non-voting ex-officio representatives: the Director of Curriculum Services, the Director of Articulation, the Director of Occupational Education, and a representative of each campus curriculum committee, among which are included three faculty members. Curriculum decisions from this group are passed to the District Board of Governors, which for practical purposes has final approval except for occupational course funding, discussed in the next section.

Tarrant County has the most unusual practice of the five colleges. Once the proposal for a curricular change or innovation has been approved by the meetings chaired by the "Proposal Coordinator," the Director of Curriculum Development and Evaluation schedules and coordinates annually open hearings with all current proposed changes or new curriculum on the agenda. Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and others are all welcome to comment on the proposals. Following the hearing, the proposals pass to the District Curriculum and Instruction Committee consisting of the President, Provost, the three Deans of Instruction, and the Director of Curriculum and Evaluation. Approved proposals then pass to the Chancellor, who has the final approval authority. No boards are involved.

Cuyahoga has a Committee on Curriculum, Degree Requirements, and Academic Calendar (CDRAC, pronounced "See Drack"). The membership consists of nine faculty representing the American Association of University Professors (a collective bargaining group) and the Joint Faculty Senate Council, four administrative representatives, and three students. CDRAC receives the campus recommendations and may raise questions which must be addressed; however it is a recommending body rather than a approving body and cannot veto programs. Local approval also includes the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and Board of Trustees, but the final approval of curriculum is by the Ohio Board of Regents.

State Level Curriculum Authority

The involvement of state governing bodies in the curriculum decisions of these five colleges varies from standardization of courses and total control with required cost analysis of programs to no involvement in either. Clearly the political forces in the five states represented have chosen differing levels of approval for community college curriculum, although there are indications of coming changes in some states.

In Florida, Miami-Dade reports multiple involvement of state authority. The Florida State Board of Education has established a state-wide standard course bank for all public higher education, although some individualization is possible. The Department of Education staff attempts to standardize all undergraduate courses. Similarly, transfer curricula are controlled for articulation of 2-year and 4-year programs, therefore all AA programs are fully transferable. Occupational programs, as indicated above, must be approved regionally.

Curriculum in Virginia is approved by the State Board for Community Colleges, though Northern Virginia's local board must approve courses and programs. The state board has the

final authority and at times exercises it for state-wide consistency.

Pima must submit all courses and programs for approval by the Arizona State Board for Community Colleges, but usually the only questions concern occupational courses, since enrollment in occupational designated courses brings an Arizona community college a forty percent increment in formula funds.

Of the five colleges in this study, Tarrant County has the most curricular autonomy with total control. The Texas legislature, however, is considering legislation to standardize transfer programs, since the state has more than a hundred 2-year and 4-year public colleges and universities.

Cuyahoga reported the most elaborate involvement by state level authority. Simultaneous with the district approval process for programs the college develops detailed justification for the proposals to the Ohio Board of Regents as specified in their Operating Manual for Two Year Campus Programs. Included must be all resources required, justification of need, and the relationship to similar programs at other Ohio public institutions. This process not only coordinates occupational programs statewide, but also standardizes the transfer process for effective articulation to universities.

The Role of Constituent Groups

The traditional constituent groups of community colleges are students, faculty, staff, administrators, and the community, particularly in relation to economic development and employer training. (The governing board may be included as the formal expression of the community's concern).

As we have seen, students and classified staff may have little or no say in the curriculum

process apart from those staff specifically assigned to curriculum responsibilities. The only exceptions are the open hearings for everyone at Tarrant County and the three students at Cuyahoga serving on CDRAC.

Faculty are involved heavily in most curriculum committees and councils, with Miami-Dade having an equal balance of faculty and deans on the Academic Affairs Council. Pima at the intercampus level seems to have the weakest representation with three ex-officio non-voting faculty members, although increased faculty representation is planned. Once again, the open hearings at Tarrant County provide total access for comment by faculty as well as others. Cuyahoga has the most remarkable faculty representation for curriculum as well as other academic matters. An Academic Quality Commission is chosen by the Executive Council to oversee and make recommendations on a variety of topics, including curriculum. The members of the Commission are chosen from recipients of Faculty Excellence Awards and are highly respected by the college community.

Administrators are the most clearly represented group in all bodies of all colleges. Of particular interest are the Provosts at Northern Virginia. They are the chief executive officers of campuses which have no instructional deans. From the campuses, curriculum recommendations go to the College Curriculum Committee in which they are five of 16 members. From this group recommendations go to the Administrative Council where they are five of seven members.

Community representation is not present in any of the formal procedures (except Tarrant County's open hearing). Two indirect methods of representations exist, however. The minutes or recommendations of occupational advisory committees are required by most colleges to

document the need for new programs. More significantly, local employers request a variety of courses and programs to meet their needs for trained employees. The methods of addressing these requests differ among the colleges. Florida and Texas have formula funding specified for adult training, as well as regulations limiting credit instruction to courses which are included in degree programs. Consequently only rarely do Miami-Dade and Tarrant County develop custom credit programs for industry. The Honda technician management program at Miami-Dade demonstrates a creative alternative. This college also has a separate vocational course bank with a section in the back of its catalog. Referred to as PSAV courses (Postsecondary Adult Vocational Certificate), they constitute an alternative and vary from Cardiopulmonary Technology to Risk Management and Insurance. The curriculum procedure described above for Miami-Dade is not involved with these courses; rather they are managed by the staff of the District Dean of Occupational and Continuing Education and carry vocational credits which are non-transferable. Also available are "STO" (Specialized Training Opportunity) awards which consist of the core courses of a program and are usually available for retraining of experienced workers.

Northern Virginia expresses similar reluctance to develop custom credit training programs. It reports that most needs are met by existing programs. One exception is a program in procurement to meet the needs of the Department of Defense and associated agencies in northern Virginia.

Pima has by far the largest involvement with business and industry for custom credit courses and programs. Not only are programs developed in conjunction with new industry, but dozens of courses exist primarily to develop skills of current employees in specific industries and at

times specific companies. Examples include a degree program in Postal Service Management (for the U.S. Postal Service), Computer Science for Industry (for IBM), and Training in Special Education (for a school district's teachers' aides).

Tarrant County, as indicated, seldom provides a custom credit program. Indeed it has a separate catalog of non-credit offerings about half of which are industry related and half of which are special interest.

An example of Cuyahoga's response to industry-related training is a Telecommunication Technology program developed in partnership with Ohio Bell and the Communications Workers of America. Although the Ohio Board of Regents funds and monitors credit programs, the Ohio Department of Vocational Education provides small supplementary funding for short-term career training, which is non-credit. Some needs are also met by the ATS degree (Associate in Technical Study) which may combine two or more program areas. Cuyahoga also has a program requested by the regional post office in Postal Management, courses in Computer Integrated Manufacturing for IBM, and courses for Intergraph CAD Systems.

Intercampus Reliability and Quality Control

With very large multicampus institutions a logical question is how course content might be standardized when taught on three, five, or a dozen different sites. Further, with courses numbering in the hundreds, mechanisms must exist to review and revise course content and program requirements. Each college has standardized course descriptions and outlines but the presence of a more specific system is of greater interest.

Miami-Dade cites two mechanisms for curriculum quality management: (1) the control exerted by a program's "home campus" from which other campuses must seek permission to

offer courses; and (2) a program review system which is controlled at the state level. Periodically the Florida State Board of Community Colleges targets programs for review including degree requirements and course content.

Northern Virginia reports no particular mechanism for auditing intercampus consistency except a semiannual meeting of faculty by discipline. Common "Course Content Summaries" are used by all faculty teaching a course. These are brief versions of the course syllabi. Curriculum review, however, is routine in a three year cycle with the curriculum office sending a packet for examination to the campuses.

Pima has initiated a program review system with a five year cycle. Within this process is an examination of courses and program competencies. The review procedures will be coordinated by the Office of the Vice Chancellor with support from the Office of Articulation and the Office of Occupational Education as well as the Office of Curriculum Services.

Tarrant County reports only advisory committee recommendations for curriculum review; however, it has a unique system for curriculum standardization throughout the district. In response to a recommendation by the accrediting team of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges that the college standardize curriculum, each course now has a generic syllabus. Although it does not specify textbooks or assignments, this document indicates the knowledge or skills specifically expected of a successful student in terms of broad statements in a standard format.

Cuyahoga reports a curriculum review process in a five-year cycle. Packets for examination and review are sent to Deans of Instruction and the Lead Dean for multicampus programs. No particular system exists for intercampus reliability except the expectation that faculty will follow

course outlines.

Consistency in the Midst of Diversity

The variety of methods through which these five colleges manage curriculum demonstrates adaptation to forces which they share. Each has responded somewhat differently to common factors: (1) the need to balance campus autonomy with the district-wide concerns; (2) the importance of systematic procedures with orderly progression by the campus hierarchy so faculty and others know what happens to a curriculum proposal, and (3) the need to include a diverse group of college stakeholders in the decision process.

The most variety occurs in the process at the district level where campus and district personnel--administrators, students, and faculty--and curriculum professionals all confer to approve, modify, or disapprove proposals for change. The constituency of these bodies may suggest the management philosophy of the college.

Certainly the diversity of procedures, combined with the fact that all five colleges are undergoing a revision or are contemplating revisions, suggests that no college has developed the final answer. Differing perceptions by new administrators who wish to change procedures, recommendations of accrediting bodies, and the dynamics of college politics, growth, and response to community needs all foster modifications in practice. Sufficient change in practice produces revisions of procedures. A review of curriculum development within the five colleges illustrates that there is no one ideal process when faculty, campuses, administrators, community employers, receiving universities, and state level authorities all have a say in the result.

Appendix

Telephone Interview Questions

1. Please provide some basic information about your college:

   Fall, 1990, enrollment (unduplicated):

   Number of campuses:

   Number of other units:

2. What is the frequency of curriculum approval (for example, monthly)?
3. What is the college-wide organization of executive administrators?
4. Who has the final approval authority for curriculum?
5. Is there a "campus without walls," and, if so, what is its role?
6. How are training requests from government, business, and industry managed?

   Are these services for credit?

   Are the courses/programs in your catalog?

   Are there differences in the approval process for these curricula?

7. What mechanisms exist for pilot courses?

   Are the procedures for these courses different for those for others?

8. How may curriculum changes originate?
9. What is the role of faculty in the process of development and approval?
10. Through what mechanism do separate campuses have an opportunity to comment on proposals?
11. What is the role of university articulation issues in curriculum development?

12. What is the role of course outlines/objectives/syllabi in the process?

13. What mechanism, if any, exists to monitor intercampus consistency for courses?

14. What mechanism exists for curriculum or program review?

15. What mechanisms exist for systems integration; for example of library services, student services, placement, etc.

16. Are there special guidelines for course numbering?

    For course descriptions?

    For "house numbered" or omnibus courses, for example all special topics courses with the same number?

17. What, if any, role does the state level authority play in the college curriculum process?

18. Are there any other issues these questions have raised which you feel are relevant?

References and Acknowledgements

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Pima Community College: Iris Weisman, Director of Curriculum Services.

Tarrant County Junior College District: Dr. Gale N. Neff, Director of Curriculum and Evaluation.

Cuyahoga Community College District: Gwendolyn Minter, Director of Curriculum Management, and Mike Bailis, Director of Vocational Education.